

# Gus Heningburg Part II

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

port authority, housing authority, mayor, newark, people, tobin, building, airport, bob, union, judge, terms, run, housing, lawyers, city, read, construction, stella, money

## SPEAKERS

Robert Curvin, Gus Heningburg

### Gus Heningburg 00:16

And basically they threaten the governor. And his reelection campaign was so much in doubt that I think it made an extraordinary impression. So the program never got started in Atlantic City. But they term they terminated the program, the funding for the program in Newark. That's how it came to an end. Yeah. But by that time-

### Robert Curvin 00:40

But he didn't terminate it..

### Gus Heningburg 00:42

Yes, he just didn't renew. At the end of the year, whenever the renewal came up, he didn't renew it. That is what ultimately cause the closure of the Newark construction trades training Corporation. By that time, and we had over 200 guys who had gotten into the various unions, some were working and some weren't some got into union and still went to another job every day. But the core of trained and union member minority people in Essex, is unmatched anywhere in the state of New Jersey, as an example. They're building Xanadu, in Bergen County. Huge project, there isn't a single union in Bergen County with a single minority member. That will dramatically now (unintelligible) twelve miles apart. But it's in another county and the construction unions have organized by county in New Jersey. But if nobody brings pressure to bear, whether it's Atlantic County, or Essex County, or Bergen County, nothing will happen. The city, and this is an interesting observation. The city of Newark, never put a single penny into the Newark construction trades training Corporation. That's through Gibson, James, the city of Newark never for the penny into the program. I won't comment about that. I'm simply reporting that

### Robert Curvin 02:24

Why do you think that's so?

### Gus Heningburg 02:28

Well, part of it is what I never asked them for anything. Well, part of the reason I didn't ask for it is I didn't think I'd get it. And I didn't need it. As long as I had Victoria and Dodge, and, and so on, and finally made peace with the unions.

**Robert Curvin** 02:50

But wouldn't it have made a significant difference if the city had embraced this effort?

**Gus Heningburg** 02:59

Probably, but it would have brought some liabilities. Now, Gus, if we give you all some money, I want to be sure my grandfather gets a job as an iron worker. He's only 92 years old, but he needs a job. See? I didn't. Harry Wheeler came along at some point and tried to create another kind of training institution. It didn't work. Because by that time, the unions had wedded themselves to the one they had. And I'm still wedded to it. The cooperation we still get from the construction unions in Essex County is extraordinary. But right across the bridge in Bergen County, zilch, nothing, Union County, zilch, nothing. As an aside, Bob, there were two or three black guys in the unions when they started building Terminal B. And that was what focused us on the airport was terminal B's construction. And I'm leaving at 5:55 I could sit up with my binoculars and tell you how many workers were out there every morning. And when basically, we shut down Terminal B. We were moving toward that and the union leadership knew if we don't respond to this, the same thing is going to happen that happened at all these other places around here in this County, in Essex. And one night the guy who you greeted when you came into the lobby at 5:55 called me up upstairs and he said, Gus, there's two cops down here to see you. And I said well, what do they want to see me about? He says Listen, all I do is tell people you want them up there I'll tell them to come up there. They came. It was two Port Authority policeman not Newark cops. And they came up and said, "We have been sent by the Port Authority to be sure that you are safe." The problem was, I had put all these guys out of work, all those union people out of work. And the Port Authority figure, they could get along with me better than some broad based, political, whatever. And we're gonna keep him in one piece for all the wrong reasons, but, and my apartment wasn't big enough for me and two cops. And I said, you all gonna sit out in the hall. And when I asked them, by the way, who sent you, and they had a piece of paper, I think it's called an assignment slip or some such thing. Joe Vanacore who was the mayor of Newark Airport. I mean, the manager of Newark Airport at the time, who wanted this problem resolved. This was his terminal B going up over here. And he had gotten the word from somebody that they're going to whack him in the head. So he decides to send Port Authority cops, both of whom have their own union, that's a whole nother fight to keep me in one piece. And one of my children was spending the night with me, then I had moved back from Maplewood back to Newark. And I think it was the oldest grandchild who watched the cops and she folded she unfolded the chairs and put them out in the hall for them to sit on, all night long. And she says, Grandpa, what's going on here? And I didn't have an explanation for it at that point. But...

**Robert Curvin** 06:51

You make an interesting point about the pressure, and the legislation that have to work together to create change. When you were dealing with the airport situation, you came to a point where you realized that you had to exert some community pressure in order to get things moving. How did you go about that?

**Gus Heningburg** 07:19

It became clear at the, in dealing with the airport. They were not in charge. The general manager of Newark Airport job was to be sure planes land and take off without hitting each other. He really wasn't

in charge of construction. Although the terminal that was being built was related directly to the private to the airlines that was going to be Eastern Airlines terminal. But it also became clear that if I didn't talk to Austin Tobin, who ran the Port Authority, and I mean, he ran the Port Authority, there were no, no matter how many levels of people there were between him and the ground, he ran the Port Authority. And I kept trying to get meetings with Austin Tobin and it didn't work. Well, you have to meet with Mr. Somebody first and the legal counsel that you know, the whole routine. And I had never met Tobin, I'd read about him. I read powerful things about him that he built airports and Bob Moses built highways to get to the airports and you know, that kind of routine. But I wasn't get anywhere to getting to Tobin and finally decided one morning, I'm gonna get everybody's attention. That's when I decided to walk out toward that runway. I never got all the way out there, by the way, the, that was the not the logic. But the rhetoric says I walked out on the runway. I never got to the runway. If there's nobody at the airport who's efficient, except one set of people. There's a set of people whose job it is to keep foreign objects off the runway. I was a foreign object. And I never got to the runway.

**Robert Curvin** 09:11

You were gonna do this by yourself?

**Gus Heningburg** 09:13

Yeah, it wasn't planned. I mean, this wasn't something where you sat around and planned it and said I want to get 19 people to go. This was very impulsive. I was ticked off and never got out there. But the next morning, we had a meeting with Austin Tobin not five days later the next morning. The Port Authority has an office across the turnpike. That's a New Jersey office for the port of Newark and airport. And I used to go to meetings with a lot of people and I learned my lesson about you have to put them in a bus and take them with you because they will straggle in in the middle of the meeting, when the meeting is over, and so on, so forth. So we rented a school bus and got Harry Wheeler, who was representing the Mayor and Harold Phillips, who was representing the Urban League, just a whole list of folks. So we we may all get there late, but we all get that same time. And this was a meeting with Austin Tobin. And we get there, drive up in front of the building. And there are about 10 white guys standing outside. And as these guys got off the bus, one of those guys would walk up. Good morning, Mr. Wheeler, welcome to the Port authority. They knew by name everybody who got off the bus. Now I was the last one off the bus by the time I got off the bus they were all in the building. But nobody was there to greet me that Harry and all the rest of them. So I get in the elevator and go upstairs and they got a spread of food like you have never seen and pretty little girls in short skirts running around Mr. Wheeler, would you like a cup of coffee? And I'm came in here for a fight and and we're getting seduced, let me..in full view of the world here. But no Tobin, I'd seen Tobin's picture, but I've never seen him. And finally I said one of those guys. All right, come on the party's over. Where's Mr. Tobin, we came to meet with Mr. Tobin. Yes, sir. We go down the hall into a big room. And with folding chairs, and they lead us up to the first rows, they were very clear that we were going to sit in the very first rows. Nobody's gonna sit in the back row, and then to those are all sitting in front. And there was a little round table up front with one chair in front of it. So we all get seated. And I learned, by the way, why they put us in front of them. I'll tell you that in a minute. So now we're all sitting there. And I'm saying to the Port Authority, "Where's Austin Tobin? I didn't come with all due respect, y'all. I didn't come to meet y'all I can meet with Tobin" Tobin walks in from another door, sits down and reads, and he didn't ad-lib a single word, read a response to all the demands I had made on the Port Authority for over two, three

years. Everything from concessionaires, contractors, minority workers, permanent Port Authority employees, permanent airline employees, etc, etc. And he raised issues, because I was focusing on construction. Now I had raised the issue of concessionaires at some discussion, and almost forgotten about, but it was all there in those papers. And he said, Mr. Heningburg, would you - on the construction, he said, "This is not a local problem. This is a national problem. We can't resolve it locally. We need national help." And I'm sitting there saying nothing. I'm not disagreeing with it. But my focus is very narrow. It's that building right out there. He said, "We need to go see the US Attorney General. And I want you to go with me." And I'm sitting there saying to myself, "I think I'm getting seduced here. I'm not quite sure." But I'm not prepared to say no, either. So I sort of got cute, I said, "All right, Mr. Tobin. I'll agree to go with you on two conditions. Number one, the chairman of the state Chamber of Commerce go, I want the business leadership of New Jersey to be a part of this. Now, it was done. Macnaughton. Tobin didn't know I had any relationship with Don McNaughton. And the who was the second one I insisted on Oh, the governor Governor Cahill. Now, I wasn't sure that McNaughton would refuse, but I was sure Bill Cahill was not going to Washington in the Nixon administration to see, John Michell about no Black construction workers. So, I'm, you know, just threw it out there. And he wrote them down. I was back in my office, not an hour, Bob, when his Tobin's assistant calls up here and says, "Mr. Tobin would like you to meet him to join him and his party for the seven o'clock shuttle to Washington tomorrow morning. Not an hour later." And I said, and she's obviously reading this off a piece of paper. And I said, "Well, who is in this party?" And she says, "Mr. McNaughton, and Governor Cahill, just like that." And I said "Now where are we going when we get there?" She's still reading. "We're going to, to the US to the Justice Department to see the US Attorney General." Just like that, an hour later. And well Cahill was there. We all got on a seven o'clock shuttle, went to Washington secretary had a limousine out on the runway for us and went to John Mitchell's office. Tobin made the most impassioned speech I've ever heard. "General, if we don't do something about this, they're gonna be mothers with babies and carriages on the runways of our airports and people are getting killed." And I'm sitting there saying, "I know he knows something I don't know, because I'm not going back anymore." And Mitchell sat down I'll never forget this. He sat there with a pipe, there was nothing on that desk, but a pipe holder and his pipe. And he would puff on the pipe and whatever. He'd write something down. And and basically, he said, "We will take care of this." Now this I believe Bob was in August. He said, "Our people will be in Newark. On November the seventh." My only contribution to the whole meeting was, "Wait a minute. This is an emergency. Why are we waiting until November?" And this will interest you. His comment was Nelson Gross, the New Jersey Republican state champion is running against Harrison Williams for the US Senate seat. Williams is running for reelection. He said, "This administration will do nothing to impact the that election. The day after that election, My people will be in Newark." And it was very clear. That was the deal. No point in me saying this is an emergency, you got to come fast that was the deal. We go back, get back in the limousine, get in the car and come back to Newark and get to MacNaughton's office and his people up there screaming and yelling, his vice presidents and so on. Are you crazy? The newspaper reported that this, we had gone down there. Are you crazy? We have \$400 million in Union pension funds in this company and you're down there calling him racist? Are you out of your mind kind of thing. And I watched MacNaughton. And I'd watched him many times before and I could read when he's paying your attention. And when he's not, he wasn't pay any attention to them. And he would listen to him and say, "Are you finished?" and then they would leave. And finally I went in and I said, "What just happened here? Your people are screaming and yelling about you going down and calling these unions racist. And we've got all this

money in we got all their pension plans." And you know. And their threat was they were going to move and they said so on a press conference, they were gonna move all their pension money out of Prudential. And I said, "Don't you have to take this seriously?" He said "They can't move the money." I said, "Would you mind explaining that to me?" He said, "There are only five companies in this country big enough to take. I don't know what the number 400 million that whatever it was. And I have spoken to all of my colleagues and those other companies and told them what I was doing. And they are not gonna let them move a single penny." That was the end of that. That's why I went all these people are screaming and yelling. He didn't, he'd already taken care of that one. Now, think about that story, Bob in the context of the kinds of things corporate people can do, that we never asked them to do, whether we're the Mayor, whether we're the local, whatever. It was a great learning experience, to say the least. And they were not able to move a single penny. Now the other funny part the next morning now the morning before we went to watch the morning after we saw the walk toward the runway didn't quite make it but it shut the airport down. Every plane coming to Newark got diverted to Pittsburgh or somewhere just like that. So when I was having coffee with him the next morning, he says, "I see you shut the airport down yesterday." "Oh no. I knew there was something I meant to talk to you about." And he had a newspaper sitting on his desk and a picture had been taken from a helicopter of all these planes sitting there, like this, you know, going this, everything stopped just like that. And I said, "I knew it was something I meant to tell you. I just didn't get around to it." He was furious. And he said, he hands me a telephone number. And he says, "I want you to call this man right away." And I looked at the number, it was a number in Miami, and I said, "Well, who is this?" He said, That's the chairman of Eastern Airlines. And Eastern Airlines was terminal B. And the picture of this thing had all these Eastern Airplane planes sitting, coming and going, but all stopped. And he says, "Do you know who owns those airplanes?" I said, "Eastern Airlines. I guess that's what it says on the.." He says, "Prudential owns those goddamn airplanes." And I'm saying, "Oh, boy, you've done it again." "And I want you to call him." So he gave me the number I called Miami. This was about eight o'clock in the morning, I finally got this man at nine o'clock in the morning. And explained to him, "You're not the problem. You're not building that building. Port Authorities building that building. So I'm making no accusation against Eastern Airlines and so on." But two hours after that, I get a phone call from the clerk of the Federal Court. Mr. Heningburg, you're supposed to be here in court, for what? You're being sued. I'm being sued by who. And she's reading, obviously, off a piece of paper. The unions, the Port Authority, a whole bunch of people. And, and you're not here. And I said, this is the first I've heard of this, ma'am. But I'll come down there. I go down-

**Robert Curvin** 21:58

Were you [unintelligible] as the urban coalition then or as Heningburg? (unclear)

**Gus Heningburg** 21:59

No, I was the Urban Coalition. Yeah. And even when the coalition didn't know anything about stuff, it got assigned, as if it came from the urban coalition. That gave me a lot of protection, because the coalition was perceived to be all these CEOs. And the assumption was, if I'm out here doing something crazy like this, they must have known it and must have approved it. They read it in the paper in some cases. But I went down there walked in the courtroom, and Bob there had to be 30, 40 lawyers in just milling around. The Port Authority's whole legal staff was in there, the contractor was Bill Kelly, of uh I forgot the name of the company. His people were there. The union people were there with all their

lawyers. And I'm walking in and I'm being sued. I don't have a lawyer. I've never seen a piece of paper. And you'll enjoy this. I call Golden Johnson, who had just then graduated from Rutgers law school. And I knew she didn't have any clients yet. And I call, I said, "Golden. I need some help. The judge won't talk to me. He only talks to lawyers. And I know this isn't fair. But can you come down here?" She didn't have anything to do. So she shows up. Beautifully attired. And with a pink briefcase and a pink suit and paint stockings and pink shoes. And she walks in and comes over to me by this time she's looked around and seen all these lawyers. And she says "What the hell did you do?" I said, "Golden, I know this isn't fair. But all I want you to do is to represent me and ask the judge to let me represent myself." Judge won't talk to me cause I'm not a lawyer. She said "Well, let me-". She saw several lawyers she knows some of whom had taught her at Rutgers law school. And I can see her wandering around the room speaking to this one and speaking to that one. And she comes back and says to me, "As your attorney, it is my obligation to advise you, you're in a world of trouble." I said "Golden I knew that before I called you up." It never got to that point the judge opens a hearing. And the contractor was first it was the first person and he says this guy caused us to be put out of work we lose an extra \$100,000 a day or whatever the problem was. And just as soon as your contract with Port Authority, the judge then calls the Port Authority's General Counsel who walks up and puts a huge book on on the bench, the for the judge to look at. And he looks at it and he says, "What is this?" And the Port Authority says, "That's the contract between us and the construction company." Judge says "You don't expect me to read this." He said, "Judge only the line that's highlighted." And the line said, and this is in every Port Authority contract to this day Bob. The port authority can cancel this contract without cause and without notice, any way anytime it wants to. And the judge read that, and he looked at Bill Kelly, "Did you sign this contract?" "Yes, sir." On advice of counsel and all his lawyers were standing around him. Yes, sir. And he closed the book. He said this case is over. This says you signed the contract. It says the Port Authority can terminate this contract without notice and without cause that clause is still in every Port Authority contract, by the way. So that was the end of the lawsuit. They were trying to join you. (unclear?) Now, that event caused the unions and everybody else to back off, because they had no legal challenge because of the Port Authority, the language in the Port Authority contract. And what followed was two or three days of negotiations with everybody. I want minority concessionaires. I want minority construction workers. I want minority contractors. I want permanent employees of Port Authority. I want the Council for airport opportunity to get created. All those things grew out of that event. And every time I see Golden I get reminded of that exchange down there. Frank Briscoe was the name of the contractor. Billy Kelly was the president. It was Frank Briscoe Company who was the contract on terminal B.

**Robert Curvin 27:08**

Can you quickly summarize what you see as the major conflict achievements of this effort with the airport and Port Authority? Where are we today vis-à-vis construction employment, entrepreneurial opportunities, hiring policies generally?

**Gus Heningburg 27:37**

Yeah, when when we had the confrontation, there was not a single minority concession there at Newark Airport. That's not true. The shoeshine stand was the Beasleys from Irvington. They had the shoeshine concession. They were no concessionaires, no permanent employees and so on. Today, they're more minority owned businesses concessionaires in Newark Airport than any airport in America.

Today, the Port Authority has programs that do all kinds of things like training for Port Authority jobs. In other words, something came out of it in almost every area. These were the first minority concessionaires at any airport in the country. Now there are over 700 of them. They have their own lobbyists, Bob, they have a big convention every summer somewhere these minority concessionaires Atlanta. No, I've never been. I have received awards, some of which are out there on the table from them, without ever being there. And Becky Doggett, who was then working for the Port Authority, she would go to these meetings, she'd come back and bring me my plaque and whatever. But it opened up opportunities for airports all over the country, which, in many areas where we didn't even know there was a problem. We had never thought about concessionaires at airports, this all got triggered behind the construction issue \_\_\_\_ in Terminal B. And it became clear if I hadn't figured it out before. If you can't mess with the money, you're not gonna get anywhere. If you can mess with the money, and when you stop the construction, you're messing with the money. A whole lot of folks money. The Port Authority wouldn't pay Briscoe and Briscoe couldn't pay the workers and you're messing with the money. It reinforced my position that if you can mess with the money, you can make this work. If you can't mess with the money go do something else, it's not gonna work. And that's true. I don't care where you go, be it Atlanta, be it Newark. Maynard Jackson. There was a guy named when John Lindsay was mayor in New York, he had a Human Resources guy whose name I don't remember working for him. When John left office, this guy went to work for Maynard in Atlanta. And Maynard was trying to figure out a way to impact Atlanta airport. And the guy says, "Well, there's a guy in New Jersey, who figured out how to mess with an airport." And he told him, he said, "Oh, I know him." Maynard sent the guy up here. He spent three days with us talking about how do you impact the individual airlines? How do you impact the Port Authority, whatever. And it became the model, which is now being used in airports all over the country. And so yes, it had a long time, long term impact. Most of these guys sit down very well. Many of them have retired, the original 12 or 13, at Newark Airport. Probably the most successful of them was one, a guy named Bob Cruz, who owned the bookstore, Bob expanded to 30 airports around the country. And Ed Holder, who owns and still owns Air Diet (?), but his nephew owns EJE retail, which are the duty free stores at the airport. But it had a long term impact on the aviation industry. But the critical critical issue, if I had to go back and say, which was the issue that made this work, is when the US Department of Transportation said any airport that wants aid \_\_\_\_ money. That's what they build runways, money, money for building runways, from USDOT must have a minority participation plan. And that is still a requirement. So you want to expand your runways, you got to confront this issue. If you can't mess with the money, while you deal with this, the morality of the thing, it won't work.

**Robert Curvin** 32:27

If if I may it, it seems to me that you might say that the Rebellion in some way sensitized or stimulated corporate leadership in order to do something. And they, with the help of the Urban League, Malcolm Talbot at the university, created this instrument, ie the coalition came to \_\_\_\_\_. So there is a historical lineage with the Rebellion. And this is all very positive, very uplifting, in a way, and extremely important in terms of understanding the ongoing changes that can occur. Not that the Rebellion is the necessary way to do things. But this is a side of the story that's not been very well linked to the result of what happened after 1967.

**Gus Heningburg** 33:36

It hasn't it hasn't been linked. And it hasn't the story of the role of the private corporate leadership community has not been told. Did it happen in every city? No. Was it automatic? No. Was the initiative here? Did it come from City Hall? No. It came from those corporate guys. And John Gardner, knew that, by the way, when he sort of conceived the idea of an urban coalition. He identified what needs to be what the coalition needs to be made up with corporate leadership was number one on the list. Now, City Hall, not only did not take part in the creation of the urban coalition, they opposed it. They resisted it. I'm not sure quite how it happened in Detroit. I just know that the the guy they hired had worked for Bell was on leave from Michigan Bell Telephone.

**Robert Curvin 34:48**

Now there's another area where you became the critical player in the area of housing and the carrying out of the decision to demolish a lot of the public housing didn't work, but replace it under a plan created by the court what year that begin?

**Gus Heningburg 35:15**

68-69 It began with the Stella Wright rent strike. Toby Henry and Father Clements who was a White Catholic priest, organized the tenants of Stella Wright Homes to stop paying the rent. They both went to jail, by the way, for a period of time. And the rent strike at Stella Wright was bankrupting the Housing Authority. Because if they didn't pay the rent, at Stella Wright, the Housing Authority couldn't pay public service for the electricity at Columbus homes. I mean, it had a ripple effect. And I got involved in that, as sort of see if you can mediate a solution to this what appear to be an intractable problem. And we spent many hours Bob and days and weeks and months, the corridor was already I mean, the lawsuit was already going along where the Housing Authority was suing the tenants. And we were able to negotiate what became the settlement of the Stella Wright rent strike. That's the way to papers described it. I had no way of knowing it became it had become the longest public housing rent strike in the history of public housing in America. Stella Wright Homes, and HUD made a decision that they were never going to build any more high rise public housing projects of the kind that there were in Columbus, Scudder, Hayes, Stella Wright and so on. So the agreement had implications far beyond Stella Wright homes. And it seems like once you get involved in one of these things, it's not easy just to say, well, it's finished. I'm gonna go fishing. You tend to be they follow you around. Judge Lacey was the federal judge overseeing that lawsuit. And it dragged on so long that Lacey was forcing all the parties to come to his office in the federal courthouse every Wednesday afternoon, the Housing Authority director, the Stella Wright tenants, all the parties had to come sit in his office, whether y'all are talking to each other or not, you're gonna sit there for three hours. And he, in effect, forced a forum where all the parties had to talk. The Mayor had somebody there, Dan Blue was the guy who came from the mayor's office. Bob Knight, he came from the housing authority, he brought his work with him, he sat down and worked on it because we weren't doing anything but sitting there. And in the meantime, I'm running around between and among the parties, trying to find a settlement. And finally, put down on a piece of paper, four or five pieces of paper, what I thought would be a settlement that we could sell. And I was talking to everybody, the Housing Authority, the \_\_\_\_\_ Court and so on. And Lacey (?) came into the office into the meeting room one afternoon, we're all sitting there looking out the window, reading the newspaper, or whatever. And I had sent a copy to everybody, Harris, David Nim, from legal services, \_\_\_\_ from the housing authority, I sent a memo. And Lacey came in and said, I have read Mr. Heningburg's memo. I've known him for many years. I respect his judgment and walked

out. What that meant in English was that's the settlement of the Stella Wright Rent strike. He didn't say that. He just said I read it. I know him. I trust him and left and that was it.

**Robert Curvin** 39:26

With \_\_\_\_ you were appointed \_\_\_\_ master or was that?

**Gus Heningburg** 39:30

Oh no, I was I was still urban coalition head at the time. I got appointed master many years later by another judge Dickinson Debovoise. Again, because of tensions between the Housing Authority and the residents. And they've been negotiating back and forth and the housing authority created its own union and, and so on. And what what had happened and it started was Stella Wright. The the Stella Wright tenants wanted the right to run the place, we don't need you Housing Authoritywe're gonna run the place, we're gonna collect the rent that was all part of the settlement agreement. And the the case just went on and on and on. And finally, Judge Debovoice calls me and tells me I'm appointing you the special master over the Housing Authority. No Harold Lucas called me one morning. "Gus, this is Harold." He said, "I just came out of court. You You know about this lawsuit." And I said, "Sure, I read the papers every day." "We just had our 39th hearing or whatever number it was. And this morning, the judge appointed us special master over Newark housing authority." And hung up. And I'm sitting there saying, What the hell is he talking about? At which point Beverly Ballard who works for me came in. And she is she's got a whole list of phone calls from New York Times and Star Ledger. And she says, "What's going on here?" And I'm saying, "I don't know what's going on here." At which point, I get a phone call from Judge Debovoice, who I've known for many years. And, and we chat and I say Judge, "You didn't call me to chat about the weather. What the hell is going on here?" "Well, you know, we had this hearing this morning. Yeah, I know all about that. And this morning, I appointed you special master over the Housing Authority." "You did what? Don't you have to talk to people before you." And then I said, "and by the way, what does a Special Master, do?" He said, "I don't know." I'm saying, "What the hel do you mean, you don't know? I certainly don't know." But that's how it came about. And uh --

**Robert Curvin** 42:03

You worked it out at least the housing got built, the buildings got taken down. And Newark is much the better for it.

**Gus Heningburg** 42:13

I think it is the, uh, and HUD says we're never going to build any more of these. There'll be no more high rise public housing built in this country. But it is still in effect. That pile of papers right there is all related to this, this lawsuit. And the Settlement Agreement is the Settlement Agreement said the Housing Authority has got to build 1775 new units of housing, and they're townhouses. You see him all over town, Senator Lipman gardens over there and this one over there. They look like suburban housing, with grass and a picket fence and all that stuff. It's still dragging on only because Tony Golems has messed up this building this thing down on Elizabeth Avenue, that's 53 units. He wants his money and the Housing Authority says until you fix a leak, you're not getting your money. So even to this day, after all these years, about 1500 of the units have been built and occupied. There's about 100, left uncomplete, the biggest number of which are right down on Elizabeth Avenue. And when I'm fussing at the judge about this, you know, don't you have to tell somebody when you do something like this? He

says Well, I remember fondly when I was a young lawyer clapping eyes on Bergen Newark (?). You came into my office and I was working for Legal Defense Fund then. You came into my office one day, and talked me into going into Jackson, Mississippi, as a volunteer lawyer to work with Marian Wright, who was setting up a Legal Poverty Law Office in Mississippi. And I agreed to go for a week and spent a month and a half. And I said wait a minute. Judge. Are you telling me that this is payback? He says, "Oh, we don't use terms like payback." But that's how I got into this role. I hope we get a close because he's about to retire. And if he if that case gets shifted over to another judge, we're in deep trouble. He'll be starting all over again.

**Robert Curvin 44:40**

Well, there are only 100 units left. I mean, they they will be built potentially.

**Gus Heningburg 44:46**

They're all under construction. The biggest single chunk is Elizabeth Avenue that's 50, 53 units.

**Robert Curvin 44:55**

Final question. Tell me what your view is of the effort to rebuild the city, the Renaissance, quote, renaissance that is underway and what are the prospects for the city over the next five to 10 years, given the new leadership?

**Gus Heningburg 45:18**

I think the prospects are good. People are discovering Newark who had no idea what the reality of Newark is. And they're responding to it. And whenever this happens in a city, it's downtown, which starts to redevelop first. That's not a Newark phenomenon. And that's exactly what's happening here. The the renovation of 744 Broad Street and 1180 Raymond Blvd are good examples. Where real estate people have said, hey, that's an opportunity. We're gonna put up some money, and it's gonna take a little while, but we're gonna do this. And the guy who owns 744, and 1180 is from New York, I met him. My office used to be on Clinton Street. He came over on the train every morning and walk right past my office going to 744 Broad Street. He now owns several other buildings on Broad Street. Arthur Stern, yeah. And he is continuing to build. And if you haven't seen the units in 1180, you should go look at it. Oh, man, they are absolutely unbelievable. And I saw him the other day, and he says about 80% of the people who bought those units are from New York. They commute. Matrix, who manages this building. The Port Authority built this building, by the way with a black contractor, as a GC. And that land out here Matrix was going to develop into housing, riverfront, condo type housing, they couldn't get anywhere, or where they needed to be. Because the City Council kept demanding to know how many of the houses they wanted to build down here would be for low income families. Well, you don't build low income family housing on a river. That's just not the way the world works. But it killed the process. So Matrix just said we'll run this building and forget it.

**Robert Curvin 47:39**

This is the whole issue of expectations and ability or limitations to deliver on the part of the Mayor are also though very much alive and current in terms of what people are expecting Mayor Booker to do. You think that (unintelligible)

**Gus Heningburg** 47:57

It's, it's gonna have several footfalls along the way. And the people who are representing the Mayor in their what's the word, thirst for power if I can use that term? Are somehow trying, maybe not trying, effectively blocking development activities that had been planned before the new Mayor ever got to Office. And I'll give you an example. The Housing Authority, the Housing and Redevelopment Authority, has very major plans for the renovation of several areas, High Street being one of them, the rebuilding of those, some housing, some commercial, for rebuilding Baxter Terrace and so on. And they are well on the way to the hiring developers, architects financing. Well on the way. The new administration comes in and starts telling them, "No, we don't want that there. We don't want this over here. We want you to change that." So you've got two agencies that historically shouldn't be working together city government and the housing authority like this. It's what I call corporate egos at work and there's no mediator, if you will, in between. And the new administrations and any administration will do this. And we'll try to put their stamp on what goes on in this town after all, I am the boss routine.

**Robert Curvin** 49:56

The Mayor has the need to get credit for the project whether he did design (unintelligible)

**Gus Heningburg** 50:02

Whether he did or didn't, yeah. But this one is a little bit different. The same thing was true with Ken, the same thing was true with Sharpe. The same thing was true in Maynard in Atlanta. The but there's a, there's a way to go about doing it other than saying "I'm the mayor jump" or some version of that. And the to use the housing authority as an example where they've got competent leadership at this point, they ain't jumping. They're saying, "We've got a plan. We've got financing. We've got HUD's backing we've got --- and this was planned before you got here. And we're not gonna stop and start over again."

**Robert Curvin** 50:48

The Mayor, Mayor Booker was responsible for bringing in the new director of the housing authority?

**Gus Heningburg** 50:55

He had nothing to do with no. He came he came when the housing when HUD was getting ready to shut the place down. And the board and they were listed as officially a troubled authority. And HUD said, HUD Washington said, "You gotta get another director, the leadership there is not appropriate for right now." And they did a search, they had a search firm and selected and recommended the guy who's now the head of the housing authority.

**Robert Curvin** 51:37

Back from Pittsburgh?

**Gus Heningburg** 51:38

He was in Pittsburgh. He was running a HUD formerly troubled housing authority. And he brought it back to that's why he was picked to come here. That was done before the new mayor was in place. So the new mayor really had nothing to do with this.

**Robert Curvin** 51:57

Well the new Mayor did about though the new chairman of the Authority -

**Gus Heningburg 52:01**

He reappointed him he was already the chairman. And but he he's, he's a Merrill Devote (?). The chairman. He appointed, there were several members of the board whose terms had expired, but they were still there. He replaced them. But Mo Butler, the chairman was the chairman and remains the champion.

**Robert Curvin 52:29**

So you see this development process being complicated in a very serious political way over the next few years.

**Gus Heningburg 52:40**

But not not so much from the housing authority. Because the Housing Authority sources money is not City Hall. And they don't take their marching orders from the housing authority. They have to cooperate. I mean, from the city, they have to cooperate, obviously, zoning laws they have to follow like everybody else does. But aside from appointing the commissioners, that's all that's all City Hall has to do with this. Now, historically, as you well know, the two entities in this city and many other cities that are the patronage repositories, for City Hall, are the Housing Authority and the School Board. The house-- the city doesn't pay for either one of them. But these, they're big, and they got tons of people. And the efforts of city, the city government to hire the people for the housing authority hasn't worked. Because the new director, and by the way, the current HUD Secretary knew of Canard's work in Pittsburgh. And when Newark hired him, Sam Jackson, the HUD Secretary advisor, then Chairman of the housing authority, you all made a good move. That made it very clear that one Canard is known in Washington and favorably. And that's obviously to their benefit. I introduced Canard to the CEO of Prudential and to Al Coppee (?). In his role is at the Newark Alliance. Very early in the game. I said I want you all to know each other. And this was for and housing authorities role to be sure he had some backup that he knew he had some backup other than City Hall. If he really got into a fight that he's not standing out there alone. And he is literally Bob rebuilding the housing authority in terms of its role in terms of its image. He's got 'em almost on financial, sound financial footing. That's why he had to fire all those people. He says I don't have enough revenue to pay all these people. And you remember massive like 200 here and that kind of thing. Final final. As you think about your how many 30, 40 years of 40 years, 40 years or better, of activity in Newark? How would you like to be remembered 25, 30 years from now, when people are thinking about the history of the city? I've been asked that, some version of that, often. I don't have an answer. I could have, I think, made some effort to project what I have done. More than I do it, I resisted. And when people read stuff, so, for example, that resume thing he looked at people read and say, you were involved in all this stuff? Oh, yeah. Kind of thing. So I don't know the answer.

**Robert Curvin 56:23**

What about someone who, uniquely and was successful at bringing together the power of the community, the power of the private sector, and the private of government and even quasi government agencies, to demonstrate that all are needed to forge a progressive move forward in terms of equity, jobs and opportunity, is that?

**Gus Heningburg** 56:59

The theory is valid. There's a great deal of resistance to being able to do that. Because local government figures that's their role. This local government and many others that I know that's the Mayor's job, to bring everybody together. This Mayor can't do it. The previous two didn't do it either. In part because we don't hold that as an expectation for them. We the voters, we the people out in the community. We we perceive them to be leaders who set their own agendas. And we don't require them to do much of anything. I think this Mayor is less attuned to bringing people together than either of his two predecessors or yeah at least I don't see any, any effort to do it.

**Robert Curvin** 58:21

(Unintelligible)

**Gus Heningburg** 58:27

I see...he seems to be devoting his energies to Barack Obama. He's not here very often, and is leaving the day to day operations to subordinates.

**Robert Curvin** 58:47

There was a time though (?), when people made the same observation about Ken, who got very active in the Mayor's Association, the same thing happened with Sharpe and he later \_\_\_\_ there seems to be almost a tendency of many of the of the Mayors particularly black mayors to seek a more national limelight is that they're running from the the rigors and the complications of dealing with the everyday problems in the city.

**Gus Heningburg** 59:21

That may be part of it, Bob, but we unconsciously perhaps communicate to them, not just the mayors here but other mayors as well. You are in charge. This is your city, you're in charge, you've run it the way you want to run. We don't come and say we want you to do so and so and here for community groups. So we want you to work with kind of thing. That's our fault in the sense that we communicate I don't mean just Newark I mean black communities we give so many such an exalted status to whoever the mayor happens to be that it is not surprising that they once they get on that crown or in that in that chair, that they don't assume that they need anything. They don't need any help from the street to run the city. I'm the mayor, I decided to do X. Now in fundraising time comes as a little bit of backing off that's not peculiar to this mayor, that's peculiar to every mayor, I know. But they're not many cases that I'm aware of Bob, where the mayor has set as a public major agenda, to identify problem X, to see who we need to solve problem X and then go out and get those people to assume the solution of problem X because it sort of removes the Mayor from the leadership role. From the PR role from the television interview, if Miss Jones, somewhere had been the key person to bring the folks together to solve this problem. It's a form of ego, which is almost inherent in the position, given the way the media treats it.

**Robert Curvin** 1:01:24

And they have to get reelected.

**Gus Heningburg** 1:01:27

Well, that's the driving --

**Robert Curvin** 1:01:29

as doing something positive with the all the power that the people are given.

**Gus Heningburg** 1:01:36

But --

**Robert Curvin** 1:01:37

-- one of fundamental dilemmas, actually, of Mayoral leadership,

**Gus Heningburg** 1:01:42

black Mayoral leadership, yes. And obviously, it's gonna take a long time to change the role of the black mayor, to what the more traditional role of a mayor has been, and should be, who is not black.

**Robert Curvin** 1:02:03

Isn't it also the case that we may be at the end of the road for Black mayors, particularly in a place like Newark? The demographics, uh, -

**Gus Heningburg** 1:02:16

It's not going to be automatic. But let me make this quick statement, Bob. If I want, you want to ask me, What was the question?

**Robert Curvin** 1:02:26

We were sort of finishing up about the role of the role of black mayors understanding, you know, how they can be more accurately or more honestly perceived by their positions in terms of what their role should be.

**Gus Heningburg** 1:02:49

That's gonna take a while, but there's one, one of the thing that's much less difficult to deal with Bob, that I think has to happen. We need term limits. It would solve a lot of problems. Term limits for the mayor. The governor has got term limits, the President's got term limits, what's wrong with us having term limits? That will say to a new mayor, you got eight years, that's two terms, if you use two terms, and you got to get this stuff done. You can't just sort of lollygag along and get reelected, whatever. And I think in terms of curing several of the kinds of problems we talking about. If we had term limit6s `and for legislators, not just mayors, it would make a real difference. Mayor, you got eight years to get this, get your legacy in place, not forever, eight years, or governor,

**Robert Curvin** 1:03:50

That would happen that would be quite an interesting fight wouldn't it? It would be something to, uh. That would be very interesting in really, I think, creating a lot of debate and some real attention. The downsides of mayors and political leaders --

**Gus Heningburg** 1:04:13

building dynasties

**Robert Curvin** 1:04:14

and making it a lifetime job.

**Gus Heningburg** 1:04:18

And you get to the point where you believe you can do anything you want to do. Yeah, term limits would go a great deal to to put some pressure on that legacy creation.

**Robert Curvin** 1:04:32

Any final words that what did we miss? Anything?

**Gus Heningburg** 1:04:38

Well, no I think that once we have elected, in this case, a new Mayor and/or a new council. There's going to be a period of adjustment. Not necessarily for the mayor who got elected, but the people the Mayor who got elected puts around him. Many of the problems that current Mayor is having are not coming from him. They're coming from people he's got around him who feel no sense of obligation to the public out there because he didn't get elected by those people out there. And that is building some accountability. And if we don't have any accountability in the system where there's no term limits, where a Mayor can be a Mayor for life, if he is smart enough to be able to keep getting reelected, I'm not sure that's healthy. And that's not a Newark comment. That's a comment that Newark is illustrative of. But I think the wisdom that went into term limits for presidents and presidents and governors and all that kind of stuff, has merit, maybe even more merit on the ground in a city than it does for a national position, if you will.

**Robert Curvin** 1:06:03

Gus thank you so much.

**Gus Heningburg** 1:06:05

Now we have to make a deal. I want a copy of the tape. Okay.

**Robert Curvin** 1:06:12

And I will keep you posted, I might want to come back and do round two, number of things that we didn't-

**Gus Heningburg** 1:06:19

Well, let me tell you this quick story, while he's unhooking his stuff, the oldest granddaughters in college, up in Massachusetts. And when she went up with her mother, for the interview, and Maria told me this story. Oh, by the way, my son wants Frank's phone number. Okay. He told me to remind you of that. So put it down on a piece of paper. And she's going through this interview, and there's a line of students outside waiting to come in. And she's going through this interview, and there's a line of students outside waiting to come in. And the lady is trying to figure out what her core courses ought to be. And one of the questions being raised was, "What do you want to be a teacher, a doctor, lawyer, whatever, whatever." And it's getting no response from this job. And as Maria describes this, the lady is getting annoyed because she got 200 more kids out there. And finally,

after pressing her, you know, "Why are you coming to college if you don't have any goals?" Whatever. And finally, she says, "I want to be my grandfather." And the lady says, aha, "I see on the farm that you work in your grandfather's office in the summer. What does he do?" She said, "I don't know." And Maria said, The woman looked, she was all poised with her pen. And Maria says the lady looked at Chiana and then looked at her as if to say, "What am I supposed to do with this? She wants to be him. And she don't know what he does."

**Robert Curvin 1:06:20**

Well, I think that's very endearing. She obviously knows that you're doing something very often. Oh, yeah. You know, I have to tell you that I bought my first canon in Japan when I was in the military. And I still have it --. I checked on the eBay and the camera that I had, I could get about \$800 for it, I paid about \$90 But that was you know, 50 years ago, but a guy told me that I should never get rid of it because it's really the lens is the kind of lens that they don't make any more--- But this, this is a it's a monster. This is a Canon. It's digital. And it's really a professional camera ---